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Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-12 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-10 AID-05 CU-02 /082 W
---------- 023854
R 240923Z DEC 74
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9334
INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH
AMEMBASSY RANGOON
AMEMBASSY SAIGON
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI
AMCONSUL UDORN
CINCPAC HONOLULU
DIA WASHDC
USSAG NAKHON PHANOM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 19994

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, TH
SUBJ: CAMPAIGN '75 --- III

REF: BANGKOK 19703

INTRODUCTION: THE THAI NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS ARE SCHEDULED FOR 26 JANUARY 1975. THIS IS THE THIRD OF SEVEN WEEKLY ELECTION CAMPAIGN SITUATION REPORTS.
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BEGIN SUMMARY: THE PARLIAMENTARY CAMPAIGN IN THAILAND IS STILL BASICALLY QUIET AS THE CANDIDATES STUMP IN THE VILLAGES. THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR IS INVOLVED IN AN EXTENSIVE AND PERVASIVE ELECTION PREPARATION, A GET-OUT-THE-VOTE PROGRAM UNHEARD OF IN THAI HISTORY. SOME LOCAL OFFICIALS FEEL THAT THE PROGRAM WILL RESULT IN A FIVE TO TEN PERCENT INCREASE IN THE ELECTION TURNOUT OVER 1969, WHEN IT WAS 49 PERCENT. AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE PROGRAM IS A MINISTRY INJUNCTION AGAINST EXPRESSING POLITICAL PREFERENCES WHICH THEORETICALLY EXTENDS TO THE VILLAGE CHIEFS. THE PATTERN WHICH EMERGED FROM THE DECEMBER 14 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS MAY NOT HAVE CONFIRMED ANY NATIONAL TRENDS, BUT DOES SUGGEST THAT NEWCOMERS MAY HAVE A BETTER CHANCE THAN PREVIOUSLY EXPECTED. INCUMBENTS ARE THUS NOT RESTING ON THEIR LAURELS. THE SOCIAL ACTION PARTY IS RUNNING M.R. KHUKRIT PRAMOT THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. THERE ARE INDICATIONS, HOWEVER, THAT THE PARTY HAS NOT RECRUITED CANDIDATES WELL, THEREBY LIMITING ITS ULTIMATE SUCCESS. A CITIZENS' GROUP HAS ESTABLISHED A CENTER TO OVERSEE THE ELECTIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. MINISTRY OF INTERIOR (MOI) STATISTICS RELEASED OVER THE PAST WEEK REVEAL THAT THERE WILL BE 19,797,468 ELIGIBLE VOTERS CASTING THEIR BALLOTS IN 19,968 ELECTION BOOTHS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. CHUSA-NGA RITTHIPRASAT, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL ADMINISTRATION, RECENTLY ANNOUNCED THAT THERE ARE FOUR POLITICAL PARTIES (THAI NATION, DEMOCRAT, SOCIAL ACTION, SOCIAL JUSTICE) WITH MORE THAN 200 PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES EACH; THREE POLITICAL PARTIES WERE RUNNING MORE THAN 100 CANDIDATES; AND SIX PARTIES WERE RUNNING MORE THAN 50 CANDIDATES. THE REMAINING 29 PARTIES ARE RUNNING LESS THAN 50 CANDIDATES EACH. THIS CONFIRMS OUR EARLIER ESTIMATION THAT DESPITE THE FIELD OF 42 POLITICAL PARTIES, ONLY 8 - 10 PARTIES ARE OF ANY SIGNIFICANCE. A REVIEW OF THE CANDIDATE REGISTRATION SUGGESTS THAT MOST OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES ARE RUNNING IN BANGKOK AND THAT THERE ARE FEW OTHER PROVINCES WHERE MORE THAN EIGHT PARTIES ARE RUNNING.

2. MOI IS IN THE MIDST OF AN EXTENSIVE ELECTION
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PREPARATION, A GET-OUT-THE-VOTE PROGRAM UNHEARD OF IN THAI HISTORY. ESSENTIAL TO THE PROGRAM IS A MINISTRY INJUNCTION AGAINST EXPRESSING POLITICAL PREFERENCES WHICH THEORETICALLY EXTENDS TO THE VILLAGE CHIEFS. EVERY DISTRICT IN EVERY PROVINCE HAS ESTABLISHED AN ELECTION ROOM RESPLENDENT WITH MULTI-COLORED CHARTS AND TOPOGRAPHICAL PLASTER MAPS CRISSCROSSED BY COLORFUL STRINGS. THE CENTRAL FEATURE IN SOME OF THESE ELECTION HEADQUARTERS THAT WE

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HAVE VISITED IS A PERT CHART SHOWING THE SCHEDULE
BY WHICH THE ADMINISTRATIVE UNTI MUST COMPLETE ITS
ACTIVITIES OR REPORTS, AND FORWARD THE RESULTS TO THE
NEXT HIGHER ECHELON. A NUMBER OF DISTRICT OFFICERS WITH
WHOM WE SPOKE IN CENTRAL THAILAND WERE NOT IN THEIR OFFICES
IN THE AFTERNOON BECAUSE THEY WERE OUT IN THE VILLAGES
EXPLAINING ELECTION PROCEDURES TO THE PEOPLE. THE
GOVERNNORS AND DISTRICT OFFICERS THUS QUEUE UP WITH THE
PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES FOR MEETINGS WITH THE VILLAGERS.
THE SUCCESS OF MOI'S PREPARATIONS DEPENDS ON THE CALIBER
OF PEOPLE IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAM. THE MOI HAS ESTABLISHED
AN AWARD SYSTEM FOR THE DISTRICT THAT HAS THE HIGHEST
PERCENTAGE OF VOTER TURNOUT. NEWSPAPERS HAVE CARRIED
ARTICLES SAYING THAT LOCAL BUSINESS OR PROFESSIONAL PEOPLE
HAVE ALSO SET UP MONETARY AWARDS FOR THE DISTRICT IN THEIR
PROVINCE THAT ACHIEVES THE GREATEST TURNOUT. WHILE ADMITTING
THAT THE CAMPAIGN SO SAR WAS FAIRLY SUBDUED, A NUMBER OF GOVERN-
MENT OFFICIALS IN CENTRAL THAILAND TOLD US THAT THEY EXPECTED
MOI'S GET-OUT-THE-VOTE CAMPAIGN TO INCREASE VOTER TURNOUT
BY AS MUCH AS 5 TO 10 PERCENT DEPENDING ON THE LOCALITY. IN
1969, 49 PERCENT OF THE ELECTORATE VOTED.

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

3. VOTER TURNOUT IN THE DECEMBER 14 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS VARIED WIDELY FROM PROVINCE TO PROVINCE (SEE BANGKOK 19873). DEPISTE TURNOUTS OF ONLY 50 PERCENT IN UDORN AND CHIANG MAI, OTHER MUNICIPALITIES HAD HIGHER TURNOUTS WHICH RAISED THE NATIONAL TOTAL TO RESPECTABLY OVER THE 50 PERCENT MARK. WHILE NO NATIONAL TRENDS SEEM TO HAVE EMERGED FROM THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS, THE RESULTS SUGGEST THAT NEWCOMERS DID BETTER THAN EXPECTED ALTHOUGH THERE WAS NOT A WHOLESALE REJECTION OF SEASONED MUNICIPAL CANDIDATES. IF THIS PHENOMENON HOLDS FOR THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, THE CONFIDENTIAL

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NUMBER OF NEW FACES IN THE NEW PARLIAMENT COULD REACH 30 TO 40 PERCENT.

4. OUR TRAVELS IN CENTRAL THAILAND HAVE SUPPLEMENTED THE OBSERVATIONS OF THE CONSULATES THAT THE CAMPAIGN HAS FOR THE MOST PART BEEN QUIET. MOST GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS EXPLAIN THAT THE CANDIDTATES ARE TRAVELING IN THE VILLAGES AND GETTING THEIR NAMES KNOWN IN PREPARATION FOR THE BIG ELECTIONEERING PUSH A COUPLE OF WEEKS BEFORE THE ELECTION ITSELF. TINAKON PRICHAPHAN, SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY CANDIDATE IN CHAINAT PROVINCE, TOLD US THAT IF THE ELECTIONS WERE HELD TOMORROW, HE WOULD WIN. THE COMPETITION IN HIS PROVINCE, HOWEVER, IS KEEN AND HE DOES NOT FEEL THAT HE CAN RUN A LEISURELY CAMPAIGN. THERE ARE INDICATIONS FROM CONVERSATIONS WITH OTHER FORMER PARLIA-MENTARIANS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY THAT SOME ARE NOT RESTING ON THEIR LAURELS.

5. THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT EX-UTPP PARLIAMENTARIANS IN VARIOUS AREAS ARE COMING UNDER ATTACK AS COLLABORATORS OF THE FORMER THANOM REGIME. PRASIT CHUPHANIT, THAI NATION CANDIDATE IN KAMPHENGPHET PROVINCE, RECENTLY SAID THAT HIS DEMOCRAT PARTY OPPONENTS ARE ACCUSING HIM OF BEING A HANDMAIDEN OF THE TERRIBLE TRIO. IF THIS TACTIC BECOMES MORE WIDESPREAD AND THE PUBLIC RESPONDS, THE EX-UTPP PARLIAMENTARIANS MAY HAVE CAMPAIGN PROBLEMS.

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6. THE SOCIAL ACTION PARTY (SAP) OF M.R. KHUKRIT PRAMOT
IS BASICALLY RUNNING KHUKRIT THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY.
THE PARTY'S STANDARD BLUE-BACKGROUND POSTER WITH KHUKRIT'S
PICTURE IS IN EVIDENCE NOT ONLY IN BANGKOK BUT IN SOME
OF THE PROVINCES. A LARGE BILLBOARD IN MUANG DISTRICT OF
AYUTTHAYA PROVINCE, IN PROMOTING THE LOCAL SAP CANDIATE,
BLAZES OUT THE HEADING THAT "KHUKRIT SENDS YOU SOMSAK
(CHUMCHON)". THE PARTY'S APPARENT HEAVY USE OF KHUKRIT MAY
BE TO COMPENSATE FOR THE QUALITY OF SOME OF THE LOCAL SAP CAN-
DIDATES. THE CONSULATE IN SONGKHLA REPORTS THAT, WITH SOME NOTABLE
EXCEPTIONS, MOST SAP CANDIDATES IN THE SOUTH ARE OF DUBIOUS
CHARACTER AND THE ELECTORATE HOLDS THEM IN LOW ESTEEM.
IT IS AS IF THE EX-REGIME UNITED THAI PEOPLE'S PARTY (UTPP)
REMAKES RECRUITED FIRST AND TOOK THE LIKELY CONSERVATIVE WINNERS,
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WHILE SAP GOT THE LEFT-OVERS. IF THE QUALITY OF SAP
CANDIDATES IN OTHER AREAS AND OTHER REGIONS OF THAILAND
IS SIMILAR TO THAT OBSERVED IN THE SOUTH, SAP MAY BE ONE
OF THE SMALLER PARTIES IN THE NEXT PARLIAMENT.

7. AS IN PREVIOUS EXERCISES, A CITIZENS' GROUP HAS
FORMED TO OBSERVE THE ELECTIONS. DR. MAYURA WISETKUN
ANNOUNCED IN EARLY DECEMBER THAT HE HAD ESTABLISHED SUCH
A VOLUNTEER CENTER. UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS AND NEWSPAPERMEN
WOULD BE THE CORE OF THIS GROUP. NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLYMAN UTHON PHALAKUN IS THE PROJECT DIRECTOR. THERE
IS ALSO A STUDENT GROUP SEPARATELY ORGANIZING WHICH INTENDS
TO PERFORM SIMILAR FUNCTIONS.
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